

Projects: Completed

**Max #2 Placer Exploration (SR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Decision Memo currently being reviewed.

Projects: Status Quo

**Center Star Exploration (RR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Proposal is to reopen and stabilize the Center Star Mine main portal for hand digging and drilling. A second portal connecting to the main portal may be opened as a safety exit. Project area accessed on FS Roads. Reconditioning 2400 feet of old existing skid trails and mining roads required to gain access to the mine. Project in the Center Star Creek drainage.

Issue(s): Needs site visit and SHPO.

- TEAMS conducting site visit. SHPO concurrence (date unknown) after TEAMS submits report.

**Gold Bug AML Closure (P)**

Proponent: Curtis Caton

Proposed Action: Permanently close an open shaft by filling in the hole with earthen materials, such as old mine tailings taken directly from the site.

Issue(s): Needs SHPO.

- Should have concurrence by the end of September.

**Gold Dust Mining (P)**

Proponent: Curtis Caton

Proposed Action: Proposal is to drill up to 10 core holes at each of four drilling sites. Water to be brought in by the claimants. Material to be processed off-site. No temporary roads or trails built or improved.

Issue(s): Needs SHPO.

- Should have concurrence by the end of September.

**Sally Exploration Drilling (RR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Proposal is to drill at 19 sites (maximum of two holes per site). Drill sites accessed using existing roads, old road templates or by overland travel. Brushing and up to 1000 ft. of temporary road construction may be required. Placement of the temporary roads will be determined by a field review. Project in the Deadwood Creek drainage.

Issue(s): Needs site visit and SHPO.

- TEAMS conducting site visit. SHPO concurrence (date unknown) after TEAMS submits report.

### **Steamboat Placer Exploration (SR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Proposal is to excavate up to 50 test pits. Material processed using a small wash plant, with processed materials and water discharged into the pit. Process water initially drawn from Meadow Creek then recirculated from the test pit and reused. Access is on FS Roads and old trails and jeep roads.

Issue(s): Needs site visit (Steve Armstrong) and SHPO.

- October 1 ± for concurrence

### Projects: Assorted Issues

#### **AML Closures - Forestwide**

Proponent: Curtis Caton

Proposed Action: Permanently close 6 mine adits and 3 mine shafts on the Lochsa-Powell (1 adit/1 shaft), Palouse (1 adit), Red River (2 adits/2 shafts) and Salmon River (2 adits) Ranger Districts. Closure for most shafts includes Polyurethane Foam Plugs and earthen materials for covering the foam. Where bats may be present, drain pipes, polyurethane foam, metal bars, and earthen materials will be used to close the shaft. Adits will be closed by constructing a bat friendly steel gate across the portal. The AML sites are either on forest roads or have access roads to them.

Issue(s): TEAMS could not find all of the adits. Heritage will need to go to the field anew. Concurrence date unknown at this time.

- Need locations/coordinates of the missing adits.

#### **Baldy Creek Placer Exploration (RR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Proposal is to excavate up to 12 placer test pits. Materials hauled to the processing site with a small front end-loader; processed through a small high-banker type sluice box. Two small settling ponds dug to hold process water and settle out sediments. Process water initially drawn from Baldy Creek, then recirculated from the settling ponds. Access to the project area is by FS Road 1858, up Newsome Creek to the mouth of Baldy Creek, where a primitive two-track road leads upstream to the project area. No new road or trail reconstruction required. Project is in the Baldy Creek drainage.

Issue(s): Access up Newsome Creek.

- Similar issue(s) as Heritage Gulch and Heritage 2 Placer projects (Fisheries, NPT restoration)?
- If so, can we change how the project area is accessed?

Fisheries – Likely to Adversely Affect determination for Steelhead and Bull Trout. The 2-3 fords cross Steelhead and Bull Trout critical habitat; need to find alternate stream crossings or temporary structures to avoid disturbance. Needs site visit and Level 1 consultation.

- Need to conduct a site visit and decide on alternate stream crossings (if needed).
- When will the project go to Level 1?

### **Cherry Exploration Drilling (RR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Proposal is for a total of four drill sites (maximum two holes per site). A sump or infiltration gallery dug at each site to contain drill fluid. Operation will require between 500 and 1000 gallons of water per day per drill rig. Approximately 0.65 miles of temporary road required to access the project area. Exact location of road to be determined by a field review. Individual drill sites accessed using existing roads, old road templates or by overland travel. Minor temporary road construction required to access some of the drill sites. Project is in the Kirk's Fork drainage.

Issue(s): Fisheries – New road crosses anadromous stream, Bull Trout, spring Chinook and critical habitat. Need site visit to determine alternate crossing: culvert better than ford/hardened crossing. Proposal does not meet programmatic, therefore a BA will be required.

- When will the BA be submitted to the FWS and NMFS for concurrence?

Heritage – Needs site visit / SHPO.

- TEAMS conducting site visit. SHPO concurrence (date unknown) after TEAMS submits report.

### **Blue Ribbon Test Drilling (RR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Proposal is for a total of six drill sites (maximum two holes per site). Up to three sites may be active at any one time. Operations will require between 500 to 1000 gallons of water per drill rig per day, water to come from Siegel Creek. A sump or infiltration gallery dug at each site to contain drill fluids. Access to test sites on FS Roads. Minor temporary road construction and brushing needed to access some of the sites. Project in the Siegel Creek drainage.

### **Lost Bench Placer Exploration (RR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Proposal is to excavate 10 test pits. Siegel Creek to be crossed by the backhoe and support equipment, once to enter and once to exit the work area. Logs may be placed in the stream temporarily as a bridge. Heavy planks laid across the stream from bank to bank a better option. Material processed using a small sluice box. Process water initially drawn from Siegel Creek then recirculated from the test pit and reused. Access is by FS Roads. Temporary access road required to access the project area from Siegel Creek road. Project in the Siegel Creek drainage.

Issue(s): Both Blue Ribbon and Lost Bench have the same larger issue: unauthorized mining in the Siegel Creek drainage.

There are two unauthorized operations: the first is a placer operation and the second is a user-created trail that leads to several sampling sites. Both are currently under investigation by LEO. The approximately two-acre unauthorized placer operation consists of a camping pad, processing site/pad and two settling ponds constructed within the Siegel Creek riparian zone. The area surrounding the placer operation has been stripped of all vegetation and evidence of instream sampling exists. The 0.41-mile user-created trail was constructed by a small excavator. At each Siegel Creek crossing, a small work area was stripped of vegetation and excavated for sampling. Mineral sampling occurred directly in Siegel Creek and in the riparian zone. The trail and mineral sampling sites have not been reclaimed. The time-frame for when reclamation will be completed is currently unknown.

## Small NEPA Minerals Projects: Summary of Proposed Action and Issues

The unauthorized mining operations could affect the NEPA analysis for the Lost Bench Placer Exploration and Blue Ribbon Test Drilling Projects. The unauthorized mining activity may have created unanticipated impacts and cumulative effects which could drive the NEPA decision and any required consultations.

Fisheries (Blue Ribbon) – Bull trout, spring Chinook and critical habitat present. Needs Level 1 consultation.

Fisheries (Lost Bench) – Likely to Adversely Affect for Steelhead and Bull Trout and Not Likely to Adversely Affect for Steelhead and Bull Trout critical habitat. May require a Biological Assessment and a Biological Opinion. Needs Level 1 consultation.

- How do we proceed with these projects?

### Projects: NEPA Status Undecided

#### **Rex Placer Exploration (SR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Proposal is to dig 17 test pits (10 ft. x 10 ft. or 10 ft. x 12 ft.; down to bedrock, if possible) using a small rubber-tired Kubota backhoe/loader. Samples processed onsite using a recirculating sluice; process water initially drawn from Gold Lake Creek and/or Ozark Creek then recirculated through a large tub and reused. Access would be by existing roads and trails. Project lies within previously mined areas.

Issue(s): The project is situated within the Pioneer Gulch drainage. The gulch and surrounding environs were heavily mined in the 19th century. The entire project area is an historic industrial landscape. Typically the Heritage Program engages in site management, but the density of historic mining remains within the project area necessitates a “feature-management” approach, thus increasing the complexity in consultation. The project area also has a very significant Chinese occupation component dating to the 1880s. Confirmed Chinese occupation sites are not common on the Forest.

Determining EXACTLY where the project is being proposed within the maze of features / sites is of paramount importance to protect historic properties. The answer to this question may also indicate these sites cannot be adequately protected from project activity and thus require an adverse effect call in consultation which would have an extraordinary circumstance.

- How do we complete the Heritage surveys?
- Should the project remain a CE or be elevated to an EA?

#### **Devine (Pioneer) Exploration (RR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Proposal, as submitted in the 2014 revised POO, is to reconstruct 4850 ft. of FS Road 9823, including installing 3 culverts, to access the claims. Two 20-acre claims (40 acres total) would be divided into 8 zones, with the claimant prospecting one zone per season using a backhoe loader to excavate material and to load it into a scissor lift dump trailer. Processing of the material to occur on private property. The road would be left in place after operations finished for each season. Once all exploration was completed (year 8), the sites and the road would be reclaimed (year 9).

Issue(s): The proposal does not meet CE category 220.6(e)(8) where all activities approved in a plan of operation for minerals exploration will be short term (1 year or less). In order to conduct operations over 8 years using the category, a “new” POO would be submitted (scoped?) for each season, a new DM signed and the sites and the road reclaimed after each season’s operations. However, this could be considered ‘segmentation’: breaking a larger project into smaller CE chunks to avoid having to do an EA.

- Should the project be elevated to an EA?
- If not, how do we modify the project to fit within the CE category?

### **Heritage Gulch Placer Exploration (RR) and Heritage 2 Placer Exploration (RR)**

Proponent: Marty Jones

Proposed Action: Excavate 12-15 (HG) and 17 (H2) placer test pits using a skid steer loader and small excavator (HG) and a small rubber tired backhoe/loader and possibly a D2 caterpillar (H2). ATVs with trailers used to access the project areas and transport equipment and supplies as needed. The excavated material would be processed onsite. Process water would initially be drawn from Newsome Creek, and recirculated from a small settling pond (HG) or a 100-gallon holding tank and reused (H2).

Access to the project area (same for both) is by Forest Road 1858 up Newsome Creek to Forest Road 1826, up Road 1826 to Trail 819 to Newsome Creek, up Newsome Creek via Trail 826 to the project site. Some trail reconstruction would be required for HG in order to access the project site with equipment. Access to the project areas would require nine stream crossings (total).

Issue(s): The issues are the same for both projects.

1. Newsome Creek is designated critical habitat (present in both project areas) for Steelhead and Bull Trout and both species have been documented in the creek. Equipment travelling up/in Newsome Creek would likely adversely affect both species and their critical habitat by altering breeding habitat, damaging redds, causing direct mortality of individuals (primarily young), increasing sediment, etc. In addition, depending on how constructed, the stream crossings could lead to excessive sedimentation and bank destabilization, further affecting the species/critical habitat.

Jill Olson and Katherine Thompson have determined (but not documented through analysis, i.e. a BA) that both projects would have significant effects on Fisheries resources, i.e. Steelhead and Bull Trout and their critical habitat. Requires BA and Biological Opinion.

2. Both Heritage Gulch and Heritage 2 are within sections of Newsome Creek of the watershed restoration project implemented by the Nez Perce Tribe. Per Katherine Thompson, the restoration project has been successful with beavers reoccupying the upper reaches of the creek. Allowing heavy equipment and ATVs

to drive up and in Newsome Creek to access the project sites likely a significant issue with the Tribe.

- Should the projects be elevated to an EA?
- If not, how do we modify the projects to fit within the CE category?